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Israel Alvarado, PCA
Meriden
District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Israel Alvarado and I am a PCA in Meriden.

I've been a PCA home care provider for 5 years, both in Pennsylvania and now here in Connecticut. I love the work I do because I truly enjoy caring for others and I am good at it. I've become a kind of troubleshooter because I can deescalate situations with very behavioral consumers. Every day, my goal is to make the world of my consumer a little better, a step closer to normalcy and independence.

In Pennsylvania, I qualified for Medicaid. I relocated with my family to Connecticut for a better way of living, but because I make a dollar or two more an hour as a PCA here, I don't qualify for Medicaid here. I have no health insurance, which means I'm stuck in a never-ending cycle between a rock and a hard place.

A year ago, I had a heart attack. Now, I've tapped out all my resources to pay for my heart medications, but I still have to ration them week to week – one week I'll take one, the next week another. I pay for what I can afford and go without the rest. Talking to you right now, I haven't taken my blood thinner for a week, which puts me at higher risk of a blood clot traveling to my heart and causing another heart attack.

I need an operation to put a stent in my heart valve because I have an artery that is 70% blocked. But I can't afford a surgery, because again, I don't have health insurance. Recently I saw a doctor, and I just got a \$1,512.78 bill.

In December, I got COVID and I was out for 3 and a half weeks with no pay. As PCAs, we don't have any paid sick days. If it weren't for the support of my family, I wouldn't have made it through financially. Even with their support, my car note is in forbearance. I rely on my car to get to work.

We either stop work and live off the system, or we work 2-3 jobs to make ends meet. At the end of the day all we're trying to do is survive. I like to sweat for my living, but at this rate, I may have to move back to Pennsylvania where at least I qualify for health insurance. I want to stay here, but we need Connecticut to step up, increase wages, and provide health insurance so we can pay for our

medications, see a doctor, and keep working for a living. That's all we're asking: to work for a LIVING, not to work until we drop dead.

Thank you for your time.